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of Engineers**

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Corps receives Interior Dept. results, advises court: 'give ancient human skeleton to tribes'

(Walla Walla, Wash.,) -- The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers announced today that, based on a Department of the Interior determination, the ancient human remains commonly called "Kennewick Man" or "The Ancient One" should be returned to a coalition of tribes under provisions of the federal Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act of 1990. In its report to the court, the Corps announced it would deny the plaintiffs' request to further study the remains.

"This report bears out the original course charted by the Walla Walla District four years ago. We feel it vindicates our actions which were guided by extensive intra- and interagency consultations," said Lieutenant Colonel Richard P. Wagenaar, district commander. "Now we will continue to work within the legal system to complete the NAGPRA process."

The report is the product of an agreement entered into by Interior and the Army more than two years ago. A key responsibility was to determine whether the remains were covered under NAGPRA and what should be done with them. Interior announced early this year that they were indeed protected by NAGPRA. Interior recently reported to the Army that the coalition of claiming tribes is entitled to the more than 9,000-year-old remains.

The Corps will continue the administrative process for transferring the remains while continuing to defend against the case in the court. Today's filing cites Justice Department guidance that the plaintiffs have no right to study the remains as they claimed under the First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution.

The Corps began NAGPRA administrative processes four years ago following a claim by a coalition of tribes: The Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation, The Yakama Indian Nation, The Nez Perce Tribe, The Confederated Tribes of the Colville Reservation, and the Wanapum Band. The transfer to those claimants was halted by a lawsuit initiated by eight academics and scientists who demanded the right to study the skeleton.

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